

English is the world's international language. But in your book, you've focused on non-verbal communication. Why is that so important?

Well, gestures and other body language can have different meanings in different places. Something that you think is friendly or polite could come across as very rude in another culture. I've described many of these customs and cultural differences so my readers don't get off on the wrong foot when they meet people from places where the culture differs from their own.

Can greeting someone in the wrong way really lead to misunderstanding?

In some cases, yes. The firm handshake a North American expects may seem quite aggressive in other places. And a light handshake—which is normal in some countries—may seem unfriendly to a North American.

In what ways can hand gestures lead to misunderstanding?

Well, as an example, we assume all people indicate the numbers one to ten with their fingers the same way. But in fact, they don't. While North Americans usually use an index finger for

"one," most Europeans use a thumb. North Americans extend all ten fingers for "ten." However, Chinese indicate the numbers one to ten all on one hand. For example, an extended thumb and pinkie means "six," and a fist means "ten." Imagine how confusing this can be when you're trying to communicate quantities and prices with your hands!

What other gestures can cause confusion?

Take the gesture for "come here," for example. In North America, people gesture with the palm up. Well, in southern Europe, that gesture means "good-bye"! And in many Asian countries, the palm-up gesture is considered rude. Instead, people there gesture with the palm down.

I've heard that, in Japan, pointing with the index finger is not polite. Is that right?

Yes. Japanese prefer to point with the palm open and facing up.

Surely there must be some gestures used everywhere, right? What about the thumbs-up sign for "great"?

Sorry. That's extremely rude in Australia and the Middle East. This is why it's so important to be aware of these cultural differences.

1. Read and tick (v) the correct answer about *handshake*

North American people expect firm handshakes.	North American people like light handshakes.
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Firm handshakes in North America may be quite aggressive in other places.

2. Read and match the information about hand gestures

1. An index finger for “one”	1.	a. Chinese b. North Americans c. most Europeans
2. A thumb for “one”	2.	
3. All ten fingers for “ten”	3.	
4. Thumb and pinkie for “six”	4.	
5. A fist means “ten”	5.	

3. What is the meaning of “palm up” in Southern Europe? (please tick (v) the correct answer)

“Come here”

Being rude to the others

“Good-bye!”

4. Fill in the gaps about “thumbs-up” sign: Although “thumbs-up” normally means great, it is considered rude in and the